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Winchester resident Karen Lynch advocates for 911 privacy bill

MACKENZIE PIERCE | CORRESPONDENT

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Winchester resident Karen Lynch has been fighting for the Legislature to pass a bill that would protect the privacy of 911 callers. COURTESY PHOTO/KAREN LYNCH

For nearly a decade, longtime Winchester resident Karen Lynch
quietly leading a campaign to protect the privacy of 911 callers ac

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Massachusetts.

Lynch is fighting for a bill to be passed that would make audio recordings of 911 calls confidential — except when accessed by law enforcement or under court order.

If the bill were made law, transcripts would remain available to the public upon request, but audio clips could no longer be used by news outlets or social media accounts for what she calls “shock value."

In 2016, Lynch heard a news broadcast of a distressing 911 call, a mother reporting that her daughter was choking.

“I thought to myself — did she realize when she made that call that she was going to have to listen to herself on the news?” she said.

Lynch recalled her feeling of moral injury from the idea of this mother’s traumatizing moment being turned into public spectacle.

Lynch reached out to Sen. Jason Lewis, whom she’s been working closely with since he was a state representative to raise support.

While Lewis acknowledged this issue is one most people have not heard of, he encouraged local outreach.

“I will continue advocating for this bill to protect people during these emotional and often frightening situations that should be kept private,” Lewis said.

Lynch first testified at the State House on Senate bill 1022 in 2017, and she has since written testimony.

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In February 2023, the bill was sent to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. A committee hearing was held in November 2023.

In February 2024, a new updated House bill, H4323, was recommended favorably by the Judiciary and referred to the committee on House Ways and Means. That version of the bill was sponsored by both Lewis and Rep. Michael Day.

Day could not be reached for comment regarding the bill.

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Since Dec. 31, 2024, no further action has been taken on the bill. However, Lynch said she remained committed to its passage.

There are currently several other bills addressing privacy in 911 calls before the Legislature.

Getting involved

Lynch's background is not in law or politics. Following in the footsteps of her father, Lynch has maintained a successful career in advertising. Growing up, she was always drawn to the creative part of making an advertisement.

"At night, I would think up ads to write for products I thought could use an ad campaign and [that] is how I made my portfolio," she said.

From creating her portfolio and participating in an internship making photostats, Lynch eventually made her way to a career at Mullen Ad Agency. Now, she works as a freelance art director mainly for no[t] companies — her dream career when she was younger.

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“I am not a quitter. I was raised to not quit anything,” Lynch said, of her career in advertising.

This steadfast attitude is part of her campaign for the 911 bill, too.

“I feel like I have to have something so that I can know that I’ve made a change for the better in this world,” she said.

Beyond her advocacy and advertising, Lynch enjoys gardening, helping her friends with their own creative projects, and managing her famously detailed to-do list. Originally from Natick, Lynch moved to Winchester to grow her family and be closer to work.

She said Winchester has been a lovely town to raise her two sons.

— Winchester News editor Nell Escobar Coakley contributed to this report.

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